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## PRESS RELEASE

### **USAID ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF INDIAN OCEAN TSUNAMI WARNING SYSTEM PROGRAM**

**WASHINGTON, DC** – The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) today announced the launch of the United States government's Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System (IOTWS) program in response to the December 2004 tsunami disaster. This two-year, \$16.6 million effort will contribute to the development of integrated early warning and mitigation systems that allow countries in the Indian Ocean region to detect and prepare for tsunamis and related coastal hazards.

The program involves a number of key U.S. agencies, each contributing specialized expertise in tsunami warning and disaster management. USAID's Regional Development Mission for Asia in Bangkok will lead the U.S. effort, with technical support from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA), and USDA Forest Service (USFS). USAID also recently contracted with a joint venture between the International Resources Group (IRG) and Tetra Tech, Inc. to provide overall support to the U.S. program as its "Lead Program Integrator" contractor. IRG-Tetra Tech's principal sub-contractor, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), will contribute additional on-the-ground technical resources.

The U.S. program involves close collaboration with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The IOC has the lead responsibility for developing the Indian Ocean's regional warning capabilities. At the national and local levels, U.S. technical assistance will primarily support efforts in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand and the Maldives – the countries most severely affected by the December 2004 disaster where over 220,000 people perished.

Tim Beans, Mission Director for USAID's Regional Development Mission Asia based in Bangkok, states, "We have been extremely motivated to work with our counterparts at the IOC, other donor nations, and national governments in the region to assist with establishing a fully functional warning system for the Indian Ocean. This is one of our top priorities in Asia, and an important part of the U.S. post-tsunami reconstruction effort. This new program follows directly from years of U.S. Government disaster management assistance to the region. We are ready to help not only deploy the technologies needed to prevent future disasters, but to build up the human and institutional infrastructure to make sure these systems are interoperable and sustainable for years to come."

Working in collaboration with the international community, the U.S. program will provide technical assistance using an "end-to-end" approach that addresses all levels of early warning capabilities from community-level disaster readiness to national and regional-level tsunami and earthquake detection and warning communications systems. The U.S. approach also promotes "multi-hazard" solutions that strengthen capabilities in the Indian Ocean to respond not only to tsunamis, but to other serious coastal hazards such as cyclones, sea swells, and floods as well as earthquakes. The program expects to have catalytic impact by sharing and replicating best



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practices elsewhere in the region and leveraging the additional resources of other donor nations and the private sector. Regional cooperation, real-time sharing of data, transparency, and harmonization will be underlying themes in the U.S. program.

In addition to leading the U.S. effort, USAID will support technical training, educational exchanges, and sharing of best practices across the region, and work closely with each of its U.S. agency partners in a number of technical areas.

NOAA will contribute to designing and developing the regional warning system with the IOC and its members. In addition, NOAA will support the deployment of detection buoys and related technologies in the Indian Ocean, strengthen national and regional warning communications systems in cooperation with the World Meteorological Organization, and implement a *Tsunami Resilient Communities* program. USGS will support seismic technology transfer to the region, capacity building for data analysis and associated earthquake hazard mapping and modeling related to tsunami hazards. The U.S. program will also include sharing USFS expertise in introducing emergency response operations into national disaster response frameworks. In addition, USTDA will identify opportunities for accessing private sector investment and expertise in communications and related technologies necessary for the tsunami warning system.

David McKinnie, NOAA's Program Coordinator for IOTWS, commented, "NOAA feels privileged to be able to participate in this important effort, and we have had very productive discussions to date with the national governments and international partners, particularly at the IOC's meeting in Perth, Australia earlier this month. NOAA shared a conceptual design for the regional early warning system, which we believe was very well received and provides a strong starting point for agreement on what the best approach should be."

"It remains critical to the U.S. to ensure the regional system is designed to save the most lives in the region," Mr. McKinnie added. "We look forward to refining this plan through the IOC with our national partners, and to further sharing our own experience in building a system that makes the most sense technologically and economically."

Until a regional system can operate autonomously, part of the U.S. program will involve providing interim support for detecting earthquakes and possible tsunami conditions in the Indian Ocean, through the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC) in Hawaii and the National Earthquake Information Center (NEIC) in Colorado.

The U.S. has already engaged directly with representatives from the IOC and national governments in the region, and plans to develop specific program activities through further dialogues in the next two months.

For more information about the U.S. IOTWS Program, please contact Mr. Tim Beans, Mission Director, USAID Regional Development Mission/Asia, tel. +66-2-263-7400.

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